AG's Great Chocolate Chip Cookie Experiment (YUM!)

American Girl™

March/April 2017



A book of baby animal posters!

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Pretty Easter egg crafts

AWW! One girl, one horse, one dream

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Follow Your Inner Star™
Volume 25, Number 2

do you like chewy, crunchy, or cakey cookies?



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Plus
AG's Cute & Cuddly posters!

American Girl

loves playing mini golf

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likes watching football

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Traveled to Alaska and loved it

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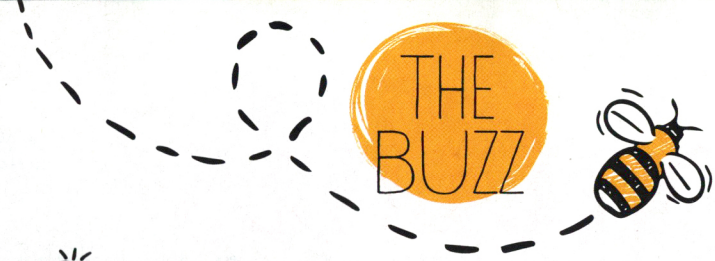
Winner of a Parents' Choice Silver Award, 2016

The National Magazine Awards Finalist

American Girl®

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WE ♡ COOKIES!

One of the best things about working at American Girl is that we get to taste-test all the recipes we put in the magazine. Together, the magazine staff tasted the different kinds of chocolate chip cookies on page 26, and my favorite was the "chewy" kind. Which one is your favorite? I hope you'll write me at the address below and tell me!

Barbara

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Write to Us!

BE SURE TO INCLUDE

- First and last name
- Address and phone number
- Birth date, including year
- School photo or other portrait
- Parent's signature

SNAIL MAIL

Send us a cool envelope! Print our address neatly on the front and your return address and the section of the magazine you're writing to on the back.

OR CONNECT WITH US ONLINE

PLAY.AMERICANGIRL.COM/PLAY/MAGAZINE



we can't print every letter, but we read everything you send to us. Hope to hear from you soon!



ENVELOPE ART BY
Ella W.
Age 13, Tennessee



Safety first!
Some of our projects and activities require an adult's help. When you see this symbol, be sure to ask an adult to work with you.

Girls EXPRESS

FOR & BY GIRLS!

Cut felt ears and a felt nose. Use craft glue to attach them, along with black pom-pom eyes.

FUZZY FRIENDS

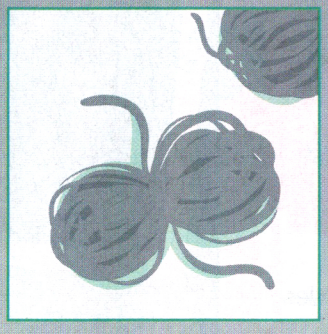
Display pom-pom bunnies in your bedroom.



To create the bunny body, wrap yarn around a book about 50 times, then cut the yarn. To create the bunny head, wrap yarn around a phone about 30 times and cut the yarn.



Slide the yarn off of the book and the phone, and lay each yarn bundle on top of a foot-long piece of yarn.



Tie several tight knots around each bundle of yarn.



Cut all of the loops. Continue to trim until you have a yarn pom-pom ball. Tie one piece of yarn from each bundle together to connect the bundles.

Photos: Chris Hynes Photography Styling: Mellissa Seymour Illustrations: Tracey Wood

AG POLL



Answer these questions to see how your answers compare to those of other AG readers.

Which frozen yogurt flavor sounds best?



- 34% Chocolate
- 29% Cotton candy
- 20% Vanilla
- 17% Cheesecake



Which skill would you like to learn?

- 47% How to speak another language
- 25% How to play guitar
- 20% How to do a cartwheel
- 8% How to tell good jokes

What does your favorite piece of clothing look like?



- 49% It's extra comfy.
- 24% It has glitter or sparkles on it.
- 14% It has a funny saying on it.
- 13% It has a floral print on it.

Meet a Pet

Carley loves her calf, Lori.



What's your favorite thing about Lori?

She comes to me and follows me around.

How did you get Lori?

My dad bought six calves for our farm. Lori is a cattle calf, which means that her mother couldn't feed her. I fed her with a giant baby bottle.

How do you feel when you spend time with her?

I just feel happy when I'm with Lori. She likes when I pet her.

Tell us about your pet's favorite spot in your home?

She likes the barn.

How would you describe your pet in three words?

Cute, loving, and brown

Tell us about a time when your pet was very smart.

She helped another calf get out of the gate.

How do you show your pet that you love her?

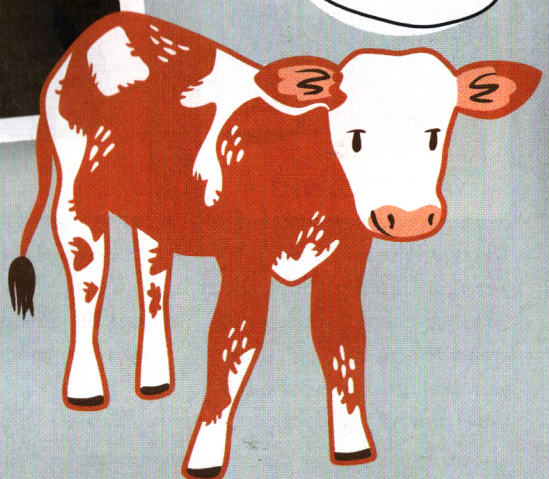
I always feed her a bottle of milk. She is very special to me.

Carley J.
Age 8, Iowa



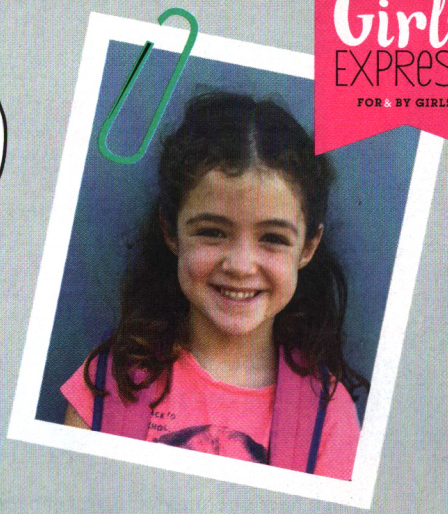
This is a picture of Lori and me.

To find out how your pet can be featured, go to
americangirl.com/playmagazine



SHINING STAR

Mia R. discovered eight ducklings stuck in a drainpipe.



You can shine, too!

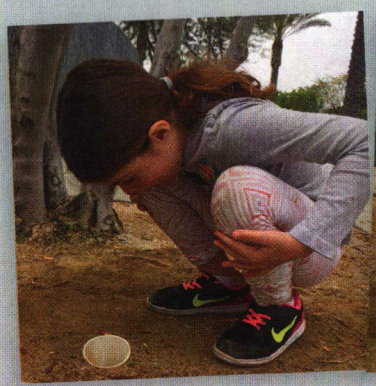
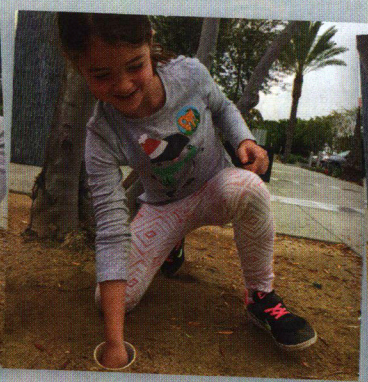
Are you an animal lover, too? Ask a parent if you can volunteer at your local animal shelter or raise money for an endangered species.

Not long ago, eight-year-old Mia R. stepped onto the sidewalk outside her doctor's office and found herself in the middle of a real-life wildlife rescue. A group of ducklings had fallen into a drainpipe. Mia was the only person around with arms small enough to reach in and save the peeping babies.

"I felt a little nervous," Mia recalls, "but I said, 'I can do it.'" Mia kneeled down, reached into the plastic pipe, then pulled out eight ducklings, one at a time. As she brought each wiggling, fluffy duckling up, she delivered it to the anxious mother duck that was waiting under a bush.

"They were so soft in my hand," says Mia. "I was careful."

When the mother duck had her babies back, she waddled away. Mia felt proud. She turned to her mom, "I don't want to be a rock star anymore when I grow up; I want to be a veterinarian and an animal rescuer."



AG ART GALLERY

Our readers love drawing cute creatures.

HELP US FILL OUR GALLERY!

Send color copies of original artwork or photos to the address on page 2. Sorry, we can't return entries.



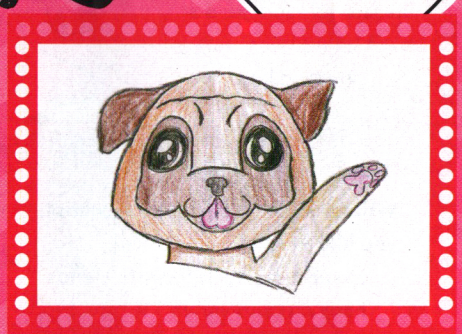


Layla B.
Age 11, Washington





Baylie C.
Age 11, Florida





Haven B.
Age 14, Alaska

MINI Quiz

Which tree house matches your personality?

1. Which game sounds most fun?
- a. Hide-and-seek
- b. A relaxing card game
- c. A funny board game

2. Which headphones would you choose?

a.



b.



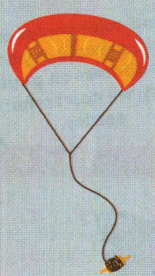
c.



3. If you lost your favorite hat, you would . . .
- a. retrace your steps and search for it everywhere.
- b. knit yourself a new one.
- c. make a poster of your hat to hang up at school.

4. Which kite would you like to fly?

a.



b.



c.



5. When you come home from school, you like to . . .
- a. spend time outside with friends.
- b. hang out and watch TV.
- c. do a fun craft.

Mostly a's
YOU'RE AN ADVENTURE TREE FORT!

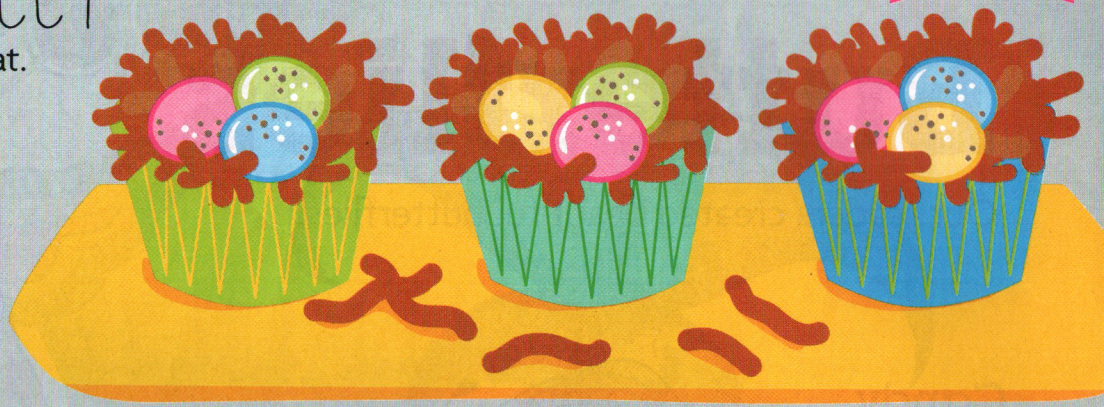
Mostly b's
YOU'RE A MAGICAL TREE HOUSE!

Mostly c's
YOU'RE AN ARTSY TREE HOUSE!

TWEET, tweet

Make a tiny bird's nest to eat.

Ask an adult to melt 1 package (14 ounces) of chocolate melts in the microwave. Mix in 5 cups chow mein noodles until the noodles are coated. Drop by teaspoonfuls into mini muffin liners. Place three small chocolate eggs in the "nest" and enjoy!



TRUE STORY

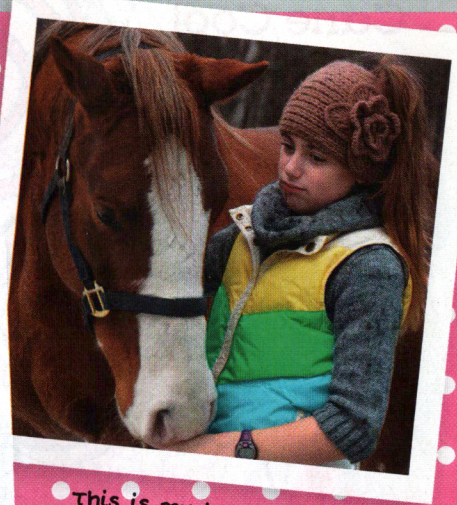
Macee lives in the Alaskan wilderness!



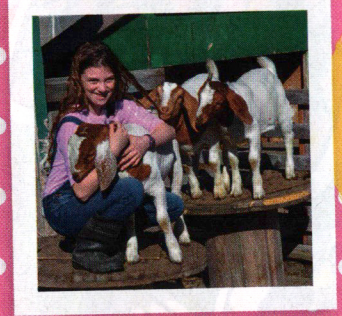
The mountains are amazing. They are so tall, and they look different every day.



When people think of Alaska, they often think of cold temperatures and igloos. But where I live, we have pretty mild winters, even though sometimes it gets down to 20 degress below zero.



This is my horse named Charlie. Sometimes I ride him out to the glacier. The glacier is a huge pile of ice that looks like a glowing blue river in the distance.



These are some of our goats. We also raise honeybees and chickens.

We have a lot of fresh, clean air. In Alaska, it's nice just to breathe.

I see moose all the time in my backyard. I've never seen a bear, but I have seen eagles, porcupines, foxes, and beavers.



This is my donkey named Daisy.

I live in log-frame house on a small farm in a valley carved out by a glacier.



My family and I preserve food from our garden and make our own yogurt.

Contest

Butterflies

Our readers created beautiful butterflies.

Dog Days



Lauren K.
Age 12, Virginia



Candy Cane Cool



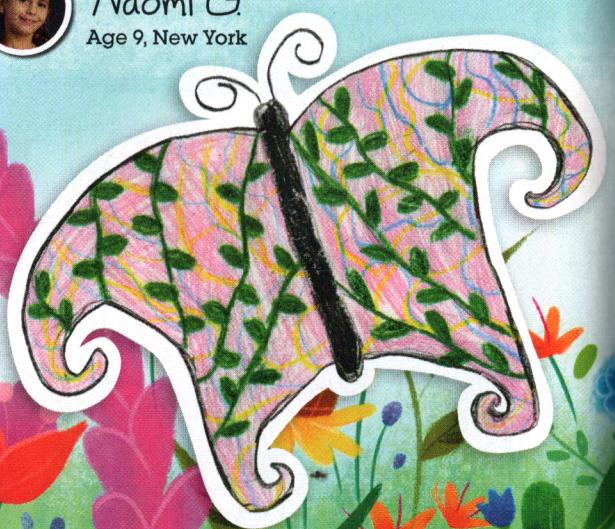
Elsie G.
Age 10, Maine



Vibrant Vines



Naomi G.
Age 9, New York





Ice Cream Crazy



Samantha S.
Age 10, Ohio

Night Flight



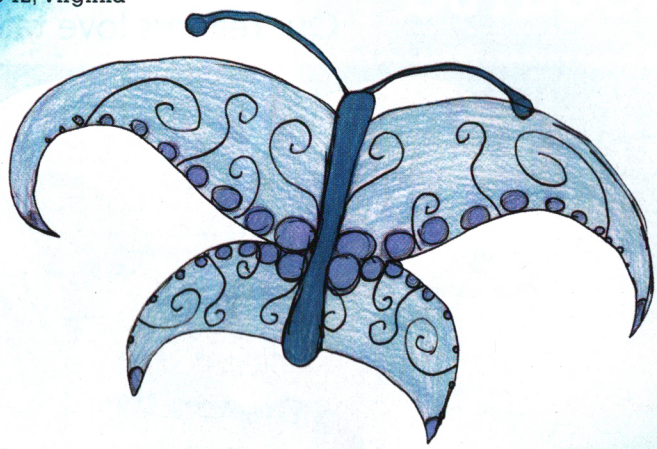
Lauren B.
Age 11, South Carolina



Really Rainbow and Magic Moon



Jewel M.
Age 12, Virginia



Fancy Feathers



Norah J.
Age 11, Tennessee



Robo-fly



Neya A.
Age 12, Virginia



New Contest: Pumpkins

Create a pretty pumpkin! Does your pumpkin have polka dots or look like a cupcake? Does it glow in the dark? Is it a jack-o'-lantern? To send us your original drawing, follow the instructions on page 2. Postmark deadline: April 10, 2017. Winners will appear in the September/October 2017 issue. Sorry—we can't return entries.

Illustration: Monique Dong

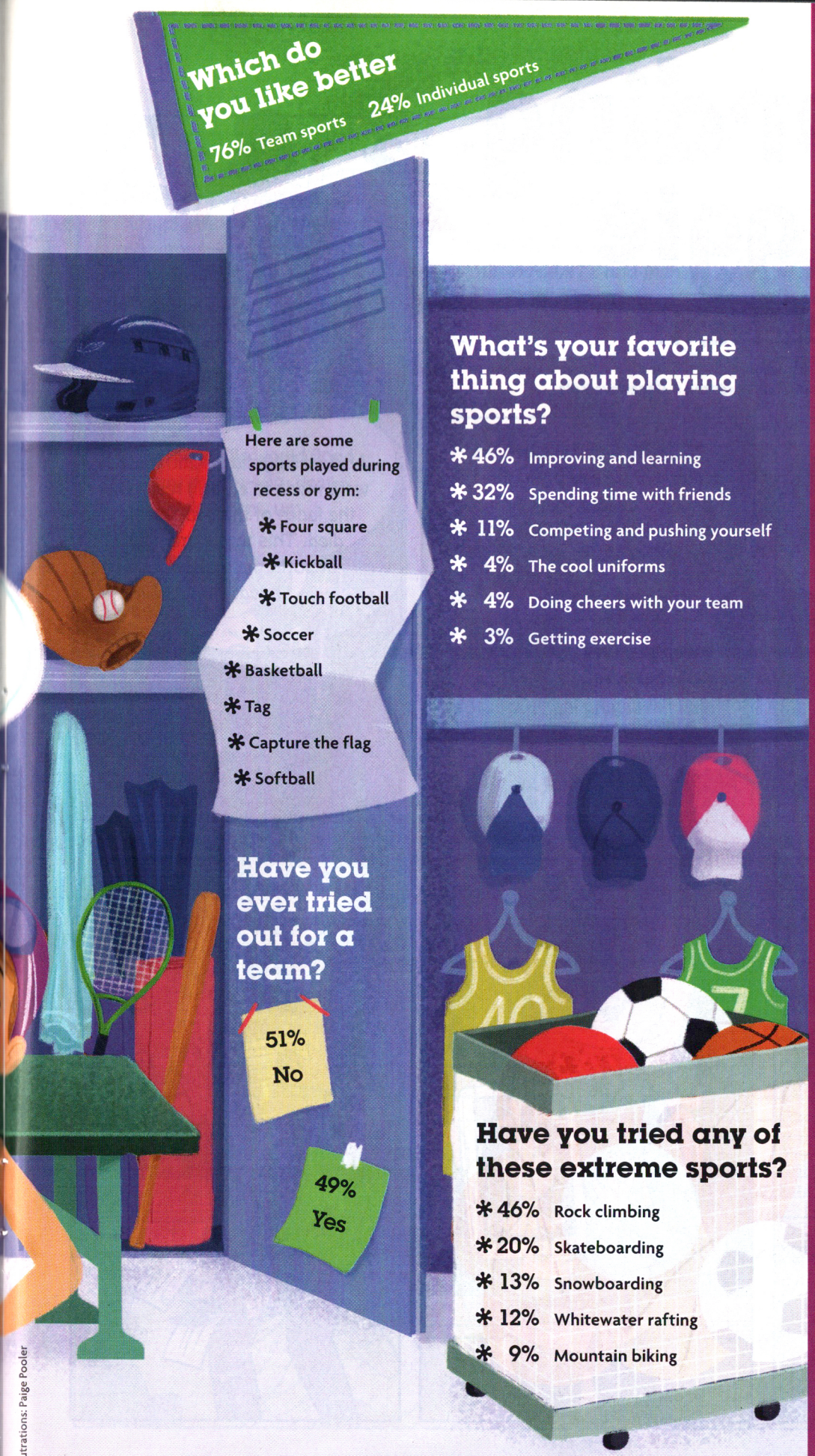
SPORTS

Our readers love talking about sports!



We loved your water bottle designs!

MONTANA P.
Age 12, Colorado



Illustrations: Paige Pooler

Coming Up:

OUTDOORS

1. **Which sounds most fun?**
   a. Camping b. Skydiving
   c. Snorkeling d. Ziplining
   e. Paragliding f. Other (list)

2. **Have you ever gotten lost while hiking?**
   Yes OR No

3. **Tent OR camper?**

4. **Which country would you like to explore?**
   a. Greece b. Switzerland
   c. Japan d. Guatemala
   e. Canada f. Indonesia

5. **Which outdoor accessory do you like best?**
   a. Backpack b. Compass
   c. Hat d. Watch
   e. Hiking boots

6. **Hammock OR sleeping bag?**

7. **Draw your dream tent.**

Send your answers to the address on page 2, along with your first and last name, address, school or portrait-style photo, and birth date. Postmark deadline: April 10, 2017. Some answers will appear in the September/October 2017 issue. ★

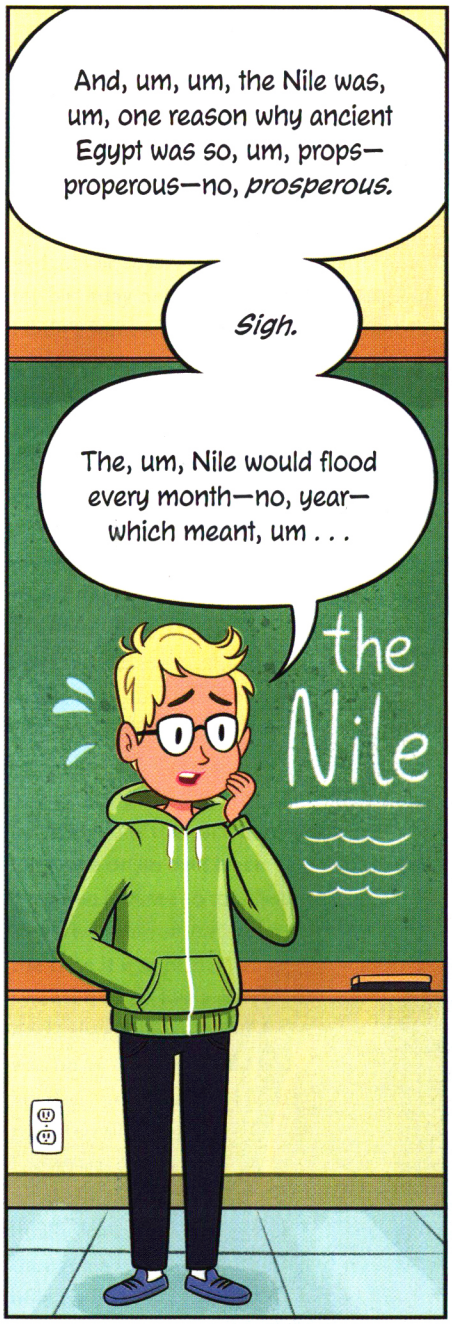
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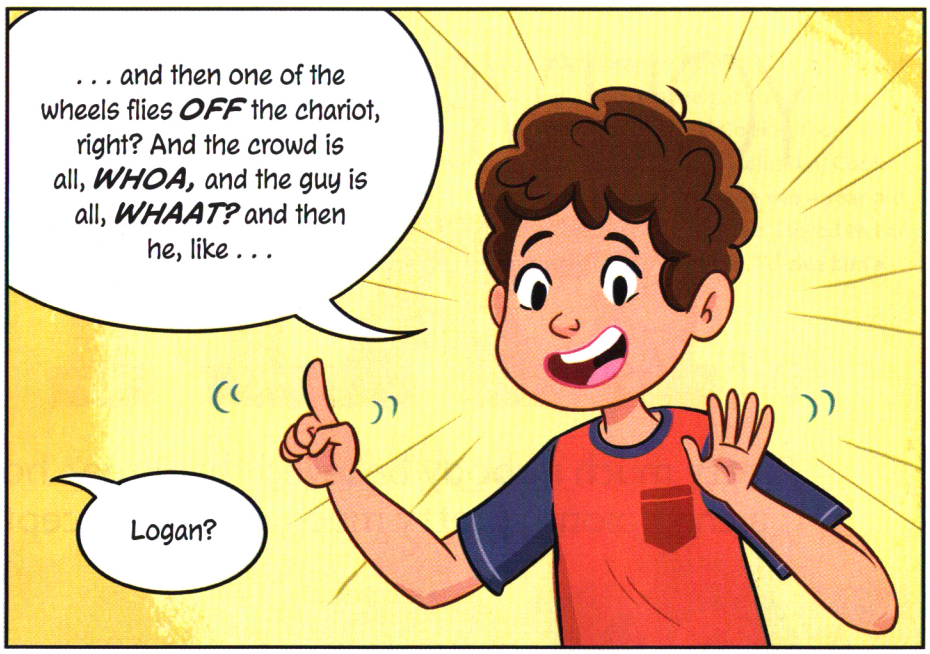
Who's Next?

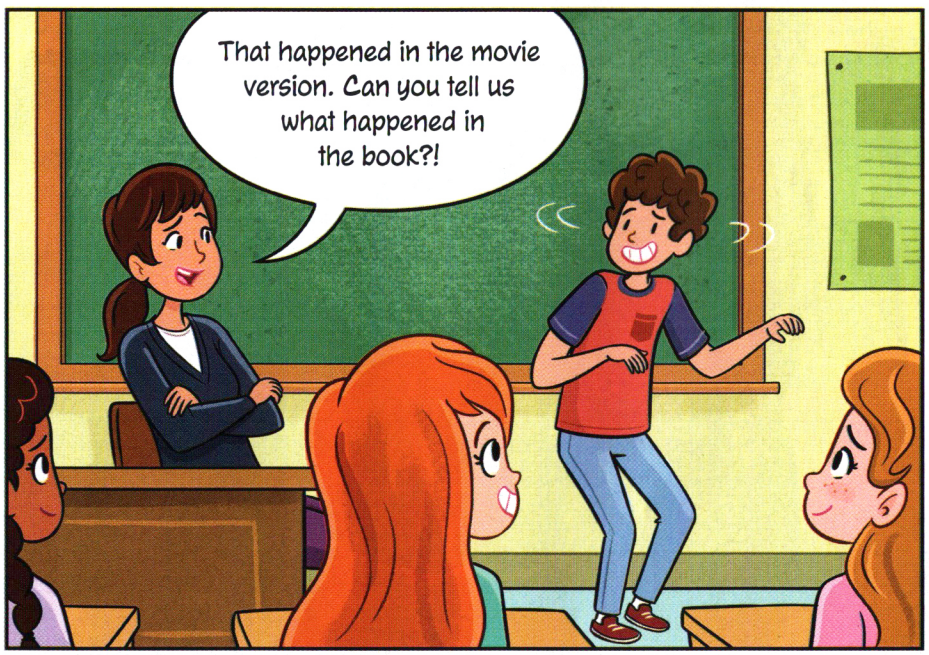


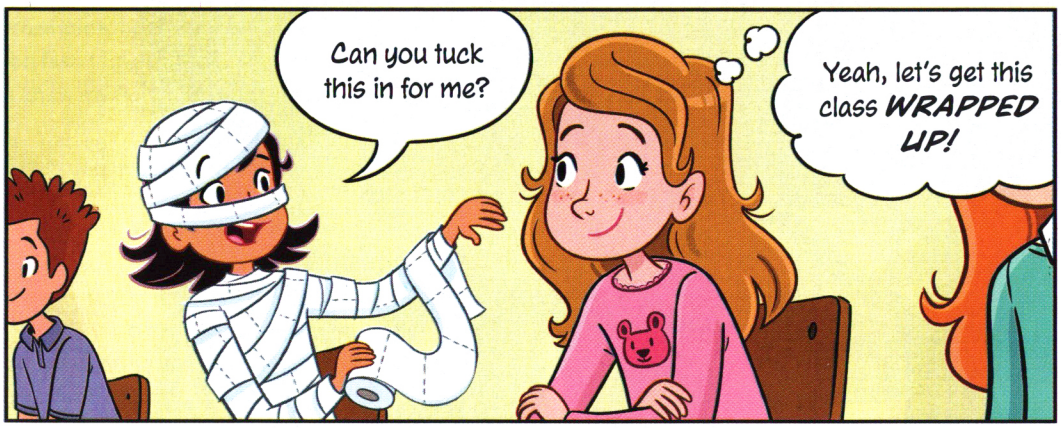
Created by
Mary Richards Beaumont, Dan Nordskog & Genevieve Kote











Don't miss my next misadventure:
BLAST FROM THE PAST



YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE FAITH

Pretty much nobody believed that Bree's horse could become a champion—pretty much nobody except for Bree, that is.



I always knew that he would be a winner.

When it comes to gift lists, I've never had to think about what I want. Since I was about four years old, every year I have asked my parents not to get me gadgets or toys. All I have ever wanted for my birthday or Christmas was a horse. But I didn't want a horse just to ride. I wanted a broodmare (a mother horse), which would give birth to a foal, which would grow up to be a champion harness-racing horse. That has always, always been my dream.

I guess you have to know a little about my family to understand. My mom and dad have been around harness-racing horses for a long time. When I was little, my mom used to take me to the racetrack. Harness racing is a sport that's fun to watch and fun to do. In harness racing, the driver sits in a light cart. Instead of wearing a saddle and carrying a jockey, the horse wears a harness, pulls the cart, and runs a mile-long race on an oval track.

When it came to my dream horse, I wanted to be able to take care of it from the time it was born. You could say that I wanted to be like a mom to my horse. And I always knew (even before my horse was born) that he would be a champion. My dad and my uncle and my grandpa tried to talk me out of all this, but I never gave up.

Around my eighth birthday, my dad finally realized how serious I was. Even though he was still trying to talk me out of it, he bought a pregnant broodmare. My dad said that since she wasn't a champion, her foal probably wouldn't be fast. I figured he was wrong, because I knew my horse would be a winner.

Late one night in March 2013, we got a call from the barn (an hour away) that the foal was coming. We rushed out there. It was like Christmas. Seeing the birth was so beautiful and awesome and amazing that I don't really have the right words to describe it. My foal was tiny and very cute. His color was *bay,* which means his body is brown like the color of honey, and his mane and tail and his lower legs are black. His mom—we call her Cupcake—didn't like people being near her baby, but she let me touch him. He was super soft and sweet. I knew he was special right away. My dad kept telling me not to get my hopes up that he would be a champion, especially because of his size and his parents. I know he was trying to protect me from disappointment, but I just kept saying, "Dad, you've got to have faith."

We called the foal Cookie. From the time he could first walk and run, Cookie loved to go fast. When he was a year old, he started training to race. I loved to hang out with him in the barn. I'd give him a sudsy bath, and he'd flap his lips and splash me. The first time Cookie worked out on the track, he crashed through a fence and didn't stop running until he got to me. He wasn't hurt—he just needed experience.

> It hurt my feelings that most people didn't believe in him or in me.



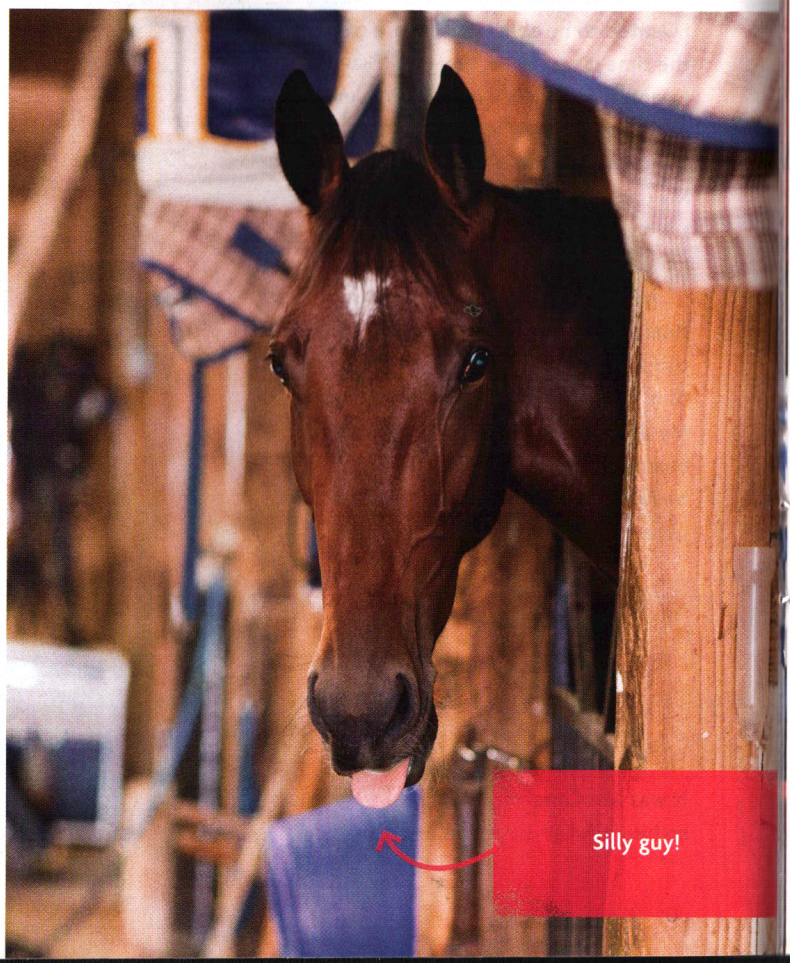
At the barn

Photos: Tiffany Stoner

He loves to be brushed.



This is a harness cart, which is also called a *sulky*.



Silly guy!

As his training progressed, everyone kept saying he was too little and too slow and that he had a funny way of moving. It hurt my feelings that most people didn't believe in him or in me. Besides me, there were only three people who believed he'd be a champion: my brother, my sister, and my mom. We had faith. That's why, when it was time to give Cookie a race name, I named him MJB Got Faith. The M is for my sister, Mackenzie. The J is for my brother, Jordan. The B is for me.

My dad was surprised when MJB's training improved. People noticed his spark. Someone offered to buy him for a lot of money. My dad and my uncle and my grandpa really wanted me to sell. My dad even took me to a farm that he said we could buy with the money. I told him, even if someone offered me one million dollars, I would not sell my horse. It was hard, feeling like I was disappointing everyone. My mom saw how upset I was and told my dad, "We're not selling the horse."



With my dad and mom

When MJB was two years old, and I was ten, he qualified for his first race. That day, I leaned my head against his and felt his power and his warmth. At that moment, I knew he was ready. I told him he would win if he tried his best and that I would love him no matter what.

in my horse. He said I should be proud of MJB, even if he lost. I said, of course I would be proud of him, but I knew MJB was going to win.

The finish of that race was so close that my dad and my uncle and my grandpa thought another horse won. But MJB was ahead by a nose and won more than $100,000. I was excited, but I didn't say much. I gave MJB a hug and a kiss. Then I gave him the winter off to rest in his pasture and have fun. He had worked hard enough.

I shared the money MJB won with people in our community who needed help. I also saved some of the money for my family to buy a farm someday. I saved some for my college fund, too.

Now, MJB is three years old and still racing. He's still winning, too. When he's not at the track, I love to hang out with him at the barn. I brush him, braid his mane, and give him apples and carrots. To me, he is the best horse in the world and a true champion. Now I have a new dream: to spend my life training harness-race horses. And if MJB has taught me anything about dreams, it's that if you believe in yourself, they can definitely come true. ★

TO ME, HE IS THE BEST HORSE IN THE WORLD AND A TRUE CHAMPION.

When he won, I cheered and clapped and jumped up and down. But I wasn't surprised—you know that I already knew he was going to win. He won his next three races, including the championship.

Before that final race, my dad told me it would be tough because MJB would be competing against really fast horses. He also said he was proud of me for believing

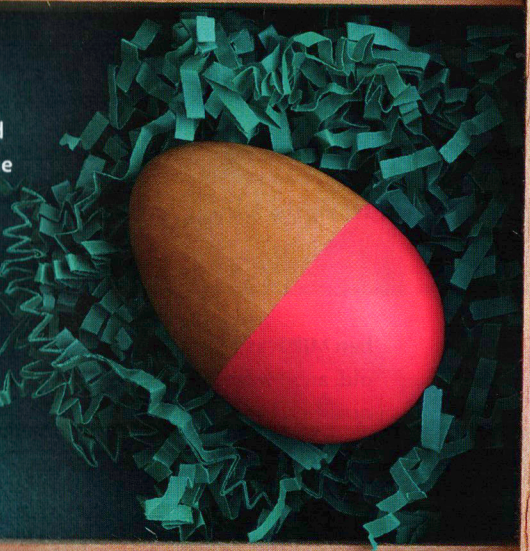
CRAFTY EGGS

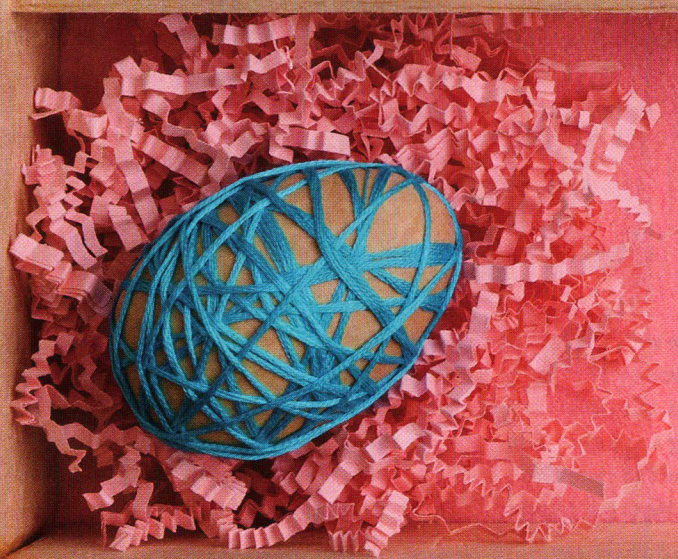
A dozen ways to decorate eggs just in time for Easter!

These crafts use artificial eggs made from **wood**, **plastic**, and **styrofoam**. (Find these at craft stores and discount stores.) Unlike real eggs, they're safe to display at room temperature, and you can save them from year to year. Remember to cover your work surface before making any crafts.

PAINT

Wrap masking tape around an egg. Paint one half of the egg using nontoxic acrylic craft paint. (You may need a couple of coats.) Let dry. Remove the tape to reveal a color-block design.





STRING

Use clear tape to attach one end of a piece of string or embroidery floss to an egg. Wrap the string around the egg many times. Trim the floss and use craft glue to attach the end of the floss to the egg. Let dry.

GLITTER

Use a foam brush to coat an egg with a layer of decoupage glue. Before the glue dries, add the glitter. Hold the egg over a disposable plate and shake glitter over the egg until it's completely covered. Shake off excess glitter. Let dry.





CHALKBOARD PAINT

Paint an egg with nontoxic chalkboard paint. Let dry. (You may need two coats of chalkboard paint.) Draw a design on the egg using chalk or chalk markers.



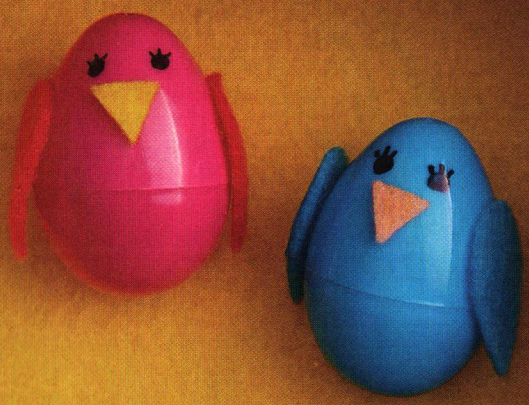
WASHI TAPE

Create designs on an egg using colorful tape. Try making stripes, or use bits of tape to make a confetti design.

Photos: Chris Haynes Photography; Styling: Andrea Debbink, Dan Nordstog

FELT

Use felt pieces to turn an egg into a bird. For the wings, cut out two teardrop shapes from felt. Make a beak from a tiny triangle shape. Attach the wings and beak to an egg using craft glue. Let dry. Draw eyes on the egg using a marker.





PAINT SPLATTER

Pour nontoxic acrylic paint (about a teaspoon) into a paper cup. Add a teaspoon of water to the paint, and stir it with a wooden craft stick. Dip the tip of a paintbrush into the paint. Hold the paintbrush with one hand a couple of inches above the egg. Use a finger on your other hand to flick the paintbrush bristles so the paint splatters onto the egg. Let dry, and repeat with other paint colors.

FABRIC

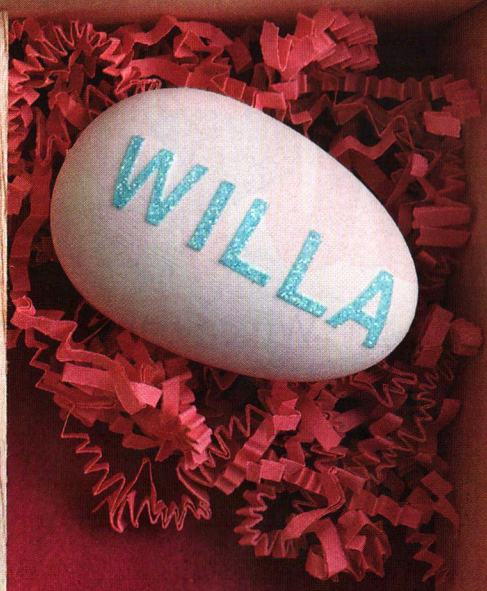
Cut out shapes from a scrap piece of fabric. (We used a bandanna.) Attach the fabric shapes to an egg using a foam brush and decoupage glue. Paint another layer of decoupage glue over the fabric shapes. Let dry.



MARKERS

Use markers to draw faces or emojis on plastic eggs. If you need to erase and start over, draw over your design with a dry-erase marker. Then wipe off the egg with tissue and start over!





RHINESTONE STICKERS

Cover a plastic egg with rhinestone stickers. It helps if the egg is the same color as the rhinestones.



LETTER STICKERS

Use letter stickers to spell out names and words on eggs.

PUFFY PAINT

Use puffy paint to make textured designs on plastic eggs. We made tiny polka dots! ★



Quiz

CUTE CRITTERS

Which baby farm animal matches your personality?



1. On the weekend, you can be found . . .
- a. reorganizing your art supplies.
- b. baking with your family.
- c. playing outside with your dog.
- d. playing volleyball with friends.
- e. watching a cool documentary.
- f. listening to your favorite podcast.

2. Which sticker would you put on your journal cover?

a.


b.


c.


d.


e.


f.


3. What's your favorite way to get moving?
- a. Hip-hop dance lessons
- b. Going for a walk with a friend
- c. Yoga
- d. Rock climbing
- e. Learning how to fence
- f. Snorkeling

4. What would you like a behind-the-scenes glimpse of?
- a. A New York art show
- b. What your hero does on her day off
- c. What happens between takes on your favorite TV show
- d. A halftime locker-room speech during a big soccer game
- e. What happens at night in an aquarium
- f. The life of the president



5. If your friend wasn't feeling confident at school, how would you support her? You would . . .
- a. surprise her with a friendship bracelet you made.
- b. give her a hug and tell her a funny story.
- c. listen to her, and let her know you're there for her.
- d. invite her to play basketball during lunch.
- e. ask if she wants to join an after-school activity with you.
- f. ask if she wants to come over after school to watch a movie.

6. What's your favorite thing about spring?
- a. Decorating eggs and painting flowerpots
- b. Having cookouts with your family
- c. Seeing bunnies all over your yard
- d. Hiking and camping
- e. Looking at plants and flowers
- f. Reading by an open window



7. Which would you wear?
- a. A pretty blouse
- b. A floral shirt
- c. A cozy striped sweater
- d. A hoodie from lacrosse camp
- e. A shirt that has planet Earth on the front
- f. A patterned tunic

8. If your sister didn't make the soccer team, you would . . .
- a. make her a beautiful bedroom door sign.
- b. hang up a funny quote from her favorite movie in her room.
- c. bake her favorite dessert.
- d. encourage her to try another sport and help her practice every day.
- e. distract her with a visit to a museum.
- f. talk through what happened and try to come up with a solution.

9. If you could go anywhere, you'd take a trip to . . .

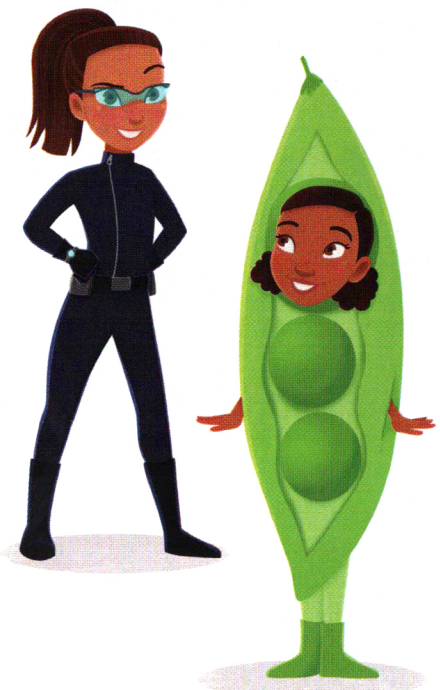
a. a Paris fashion show.
b. visit relatives you haven't seen in years.
c. the place your ancestors are from.
d. the tallest mountain on earth.
e. watch a rocket launch.
f. the hometown of your favorite author.

10. Which class would you like to take?

a. A class about making and selling your own crafts
b. A class about learning more about your family history
c. A class about training animals
d. A class about wilderness survival skills
e. A class all about crazy science experiments
f. A class about people who have set world records

11. Which Halloween costume would you wear?

a. A famous singer costume
b. A peapod costume
c. An alpaca costume
d. A spy costume
e. An archeologist costume
f. A famous inventor costume



12. You would love to photograph . . .

a. a trendy cafe.
b. the people you love.
c. your friend's new kitten.
d. an amazing surfer.
e. a cool bug.
f. an intense chess match.

13. Which mug do you like best?



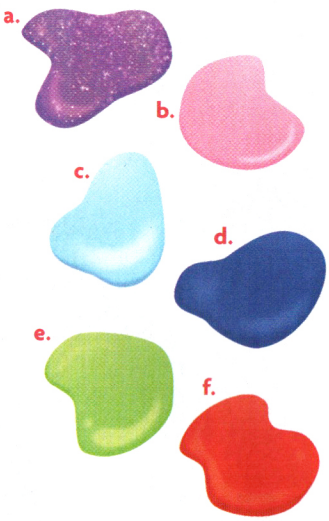
14. How do you celebrate after doing well on a really hard test?

a. Treat yourself to a stylish, new shirt.
b. Do something nice for someone else.
c. Go home and relax.
d. Dance like crazy.
e. Stay after class to talk about which questions you liked best.
f. Think about how hard you studied, and enjoy your success.

15. What's the best thing in your bedroom?

a. The cool headboard you made
b. The funny stuffed animal on your bed
c. Your comfy chair
d. The poster of Mount Everest
e. Your terrarium
f. Your bookshelf

16. Which color speaks to you?



17. When you wake up on a Saturday, you like to . . .

a. pick out your outfit for the day.
b. make breakfast with a parent.
c. watch TV with a pet.
d. do something active.
e. read a comic book.
f. plan out your day.



18. Which show sounds most interesting to you?

a. A show about young women who are fashion designers
b. A silly show about two best friends starting a business
c. A show about animals being adopted
d. A show about thrill seekers going on amazing adventures
e. A funny show about solving mysteries
f. A show about incredible things that have happened in history

TURN THE PAGE FOR ANSWERS! ➡

Illustrattions: Heather Burns



MOSTLY A'S: CHICK

Your personality is full of color! You love creating beautiful things and have a lot of fun with fashion and clothes. You're a dreamer, and you are very positive.

MOSTLY B'S: DUCKLING

You have a silly and sweet personality and love spending time with your family. You often think about what's important in your life, and you have a huge heart.

MOSTLY C'S: LAMB

Animals truly have your heart. You are very thoughtful, and you appreciate all the people and furry friends in your life. You love being comfy and relaxing at home.

Mostly D's: Baby Goat

Adventure is always on your mind. You enjoy sports, and you have a very outgoing personality. You're daring and love spending time outside with friends.

Mostly E's: Bunny

Experiments and learning about the world are your two favorite things. You're curious about everything around you, and you love taking it all in.

Mostly F's: Miniature Horse

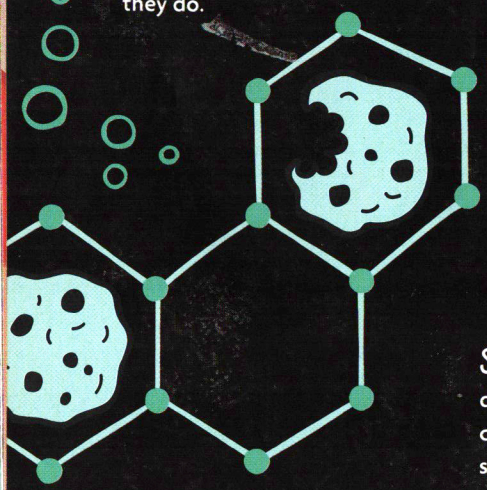
You are fun, quirky, and wise. You love a challenge and enjoy spending time in books. You really like school because you learn something new every day. ★

COOKIE CHEMISTRY

There's more than one way to make the perfect chocolate chip cookie. Whether you like your cookies chewy, crunchy, or cakey, we have the recipe for you!

FIRST, A LITTLE FOOD SCIENCE...

Baking cookies is a chemistry experiment. Part of learning to bake is learning how ingredients work together to get the results you want. Here are some common chocolate chip cookie ingredients and what they do.



BUTTER & SHORTENING: Fats add moisture, flavor, and texture to cookies. Butter melts at a lower temperature, so it spreads more when baked. Cookies made with butter will be flatter and crispier. Shortening has a higher melting temperature, so cookies made with it will be softer and less flat.





FLOUR: Flour holds all the other ingredients together. All-purpose flour is the most common type of flour, but some cookie recipes use bread flour or cake flour.

VANILLA EXTRACT: Vanilla extract adds a vanilla flavor to cookies and brings out the other flavors.

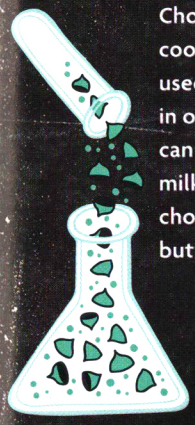


SUGAR: Sugar makes cookies sweet! But it does more than that. Brown sugar gives cookies a caramel flavor, and granulated sugar (white sugar) makes cookies crispy.



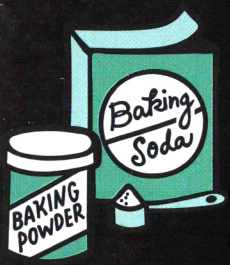
SALT: Salt brings out the sweetness of the sugar and chocolate in cookies.





CHOCOLATE CHIPS: Chocolate chips make cookies yummy. We used semisweet chips in our recipes, but you can use other flavors: milk chocolate, white chocolate, or peanut butter chips!

BAKING SODA: Baking soda's other name is "sodium bicarbonate." In baking, it's called a "leavener," which means it creates air bubbles in dough and causes it to rise.



BAKING POWDER: Baking powder is baking soda mixed with cream of tartar. It's a leavener, too, but it's not as powerful as baking soda.

CAKEY!

CRUNCHY!

CHEWY!

READY TO BAKE? TURN THE PAGE! ➡

Photos: Chris Hynes Photography Illustrations: Emily Balsley Styling: Andrea Debbink

Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ask an adult to help you with these recipes and with using the oven.

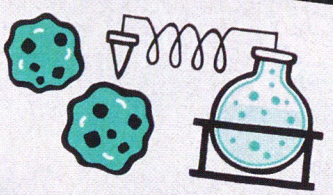
Ingredients

- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup shortening
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups chocolate chips

Directions

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together the all-purpose flour, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.
2. In a separate larger bowl, combine the shortening, sugars, and vanilla. Mix until creamy. You may want to ask an adult to use an electric mixer.
3. Add the eggs to the sugar mixture one at a time. Mix well after adding each egg.
4. Add the flour mixture to the sugar mixture a little at a time, stirring after each addition. Stir in the chocolate chips.
5. Shape the dough into balls (about the size of a golf ball) and place on a cookie sheet covered in parchment paper. Ask an adult to bake the cookies in a 350-degree oven for 10–12 minutes. Let cool.

Crunchy Chocolate Chip Cookies



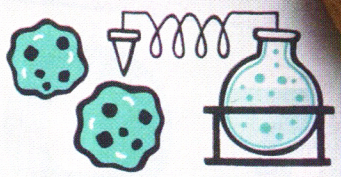
Ingredients

- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 2 sticks unsalted butter, melted
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup mini chocolate chips

Directions

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together the all-purpose flour, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.
2. In a separate larger bowl, stir together the granulated sugar, light brown sugar, and the melted butter. Let sit for five minutes.
3. Add the eggs to the sugar mixture one at a time, stirring after each one. Stir in the vanilla extract.
4. Add the flour mixture to the sugar mixture a little at a time, stirring after each addition. Stir in the mini chocolate chips.
5. Drop rounded tablespoons of dough on a cookie sheet covered with parchment paper. Ask an adult to bake the cookies in a 375-degree oven for 10–12 minutes. Let cool.

Cakey Chocolate Chip Cookies



Ingredients

- 3 cups bread flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
- 1½ cups light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups chocolate chips

Directions

1. In a small mixing bowl, stir together the bread flour, baking soda, and salt.
2. In a separate larger bowl, stir together the butter, light brown sugar, and vanilla. Mix until creamy. You may want to ask an adult to use an electric mixer.
3. Add the eggs to the sugar mixture one at a time. Mix well after adding each egg.
4. Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture a little at a time, stirring after each addition. Stir in the chocolate chips.
5. Shape dough into balls (golf-ball size) and place on a cookie sheet covered with parchment paper. Flatten each dough ball with your hand. Ask an adult to bake the cookies in a 375-degree oven for 8–10 minutes. Let cool.

Helpful Hint: Chilled dough makes better cookies. If you can, chill cookie dough in the refrigerator for 24 hours. This gives the dry ingredients a chance to soak up the wet ingredients which means better flavor and texture.

Other Variations

Dairy-Free

For dairy-free chocolate chip cookies, use the Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookie recipe and use dairy-free chocolate chips.

Gluten-Free

For gluten-free cookies, use the recipe for Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookies and replace the all-purpose flour with rice flour or another gluten-free flour. ★

I'm Out!

Feeling overwhelmed with school, sports, clubs, or other activities? You might have too much on your plate. Here's how to clear some space in a super busy schedule.



Think

Sure, some of your activities aren't optional—think homework or family stuff. But many activities are things you decide to do. Look at those and ask yourself:

Do I look forward to it?

Maybe you do—or you did when you started, but something's changed. Maybe you never really enjoyed it, but you've stuck it out because your parents or friends wanted you to. If you're dreading the activity, ask yourself how long you've felt that way—and why.

Could I take a break?

Some things are easier to press "pause" on than others, like music lessons that you take on your own or babysitting. Team sports are a little tougher, but when the season ends, you always have the freedom and the choice to sit out the next season.



Is there something I'd rather do?

It doesn't have to be another club or sport. It could be catching up on homework, or just getting more time to rest and recharge.

Choose

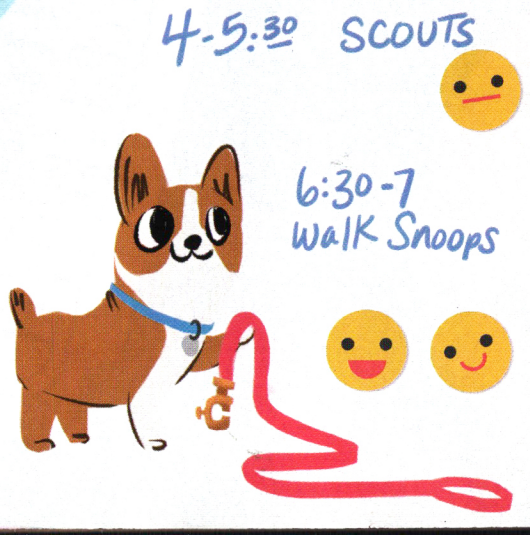
Each time you rush off to another activity, draw an emoticon or doodle in your planner to show how you're feeling.

Don't want to go?
Draw a frowny face.



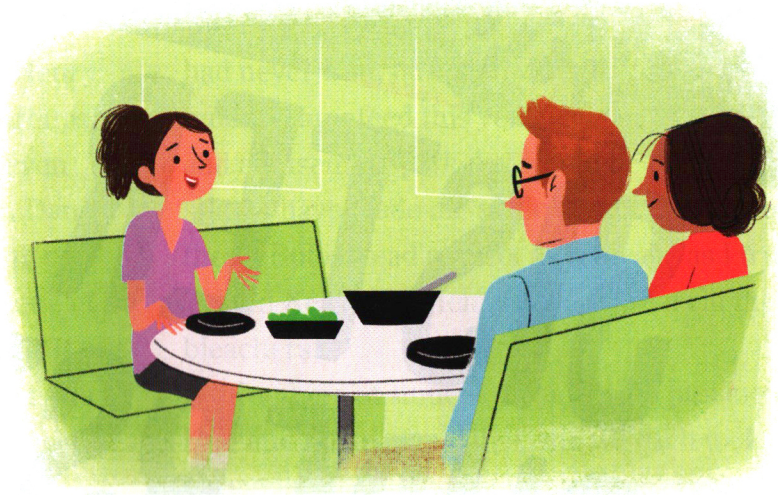
Excited about it?
Dash off two smiley faces.
Not sure?
Draw a so-so face.

After a few weeks, look back over your doodles. It should be easy to see what you enjoy and what you don't. That makes deciding much easier.



Quit

You've made up your mind about what has to go. Good for you! But hold on a sec before you announce your plans to the world. You need to make a graceful exit.



1. Talk to your parents first.

Your parents may have reasons for wanting you to stick with an activity. Maybe they've already paid for a full season. Maybe they think this activity is good for you. Or maybe they worry that you quit things too quickly. (Ask yourself: "Are they right?") Here are some ways to start the conversation:

"I am so stressed out with homework, practice, and chores, and I'm not dealing with that very well. I have an idea for how to find more time. Can we talk about it?"

"I've been in choir for a year, but I'm not enjoying it. Could I try something else, like drama club? I've found out some stuff about it, and I think I'd enjoy it more."

"I know you loved dance when you were my age, but it's not right for me. If you're going to pay for lessons, can it be for something I like better and think I'm good at?

2. Choose the best end date.

Pick a time that won't leave teammates or friends hanging—not before a big game, for example. Finish out the season, or ask your coach about a natural stopping point. Another reason to wait? Your feelings may change. You might master a new skill, or a friend may join the club and make it feel fun again. Give yourself time to be sure.



3. Tell your coach or instructor.

Do this yourself. It doesn't have to be scary—you're not doing anything wrong. In fact, if you announce the decision, you'll look like a mature girl who knows her own mind. Practice ahead of time so that you can easily explain your feelings. Thank your coach or instructor for all you've learned.



4. Talk to your friends.

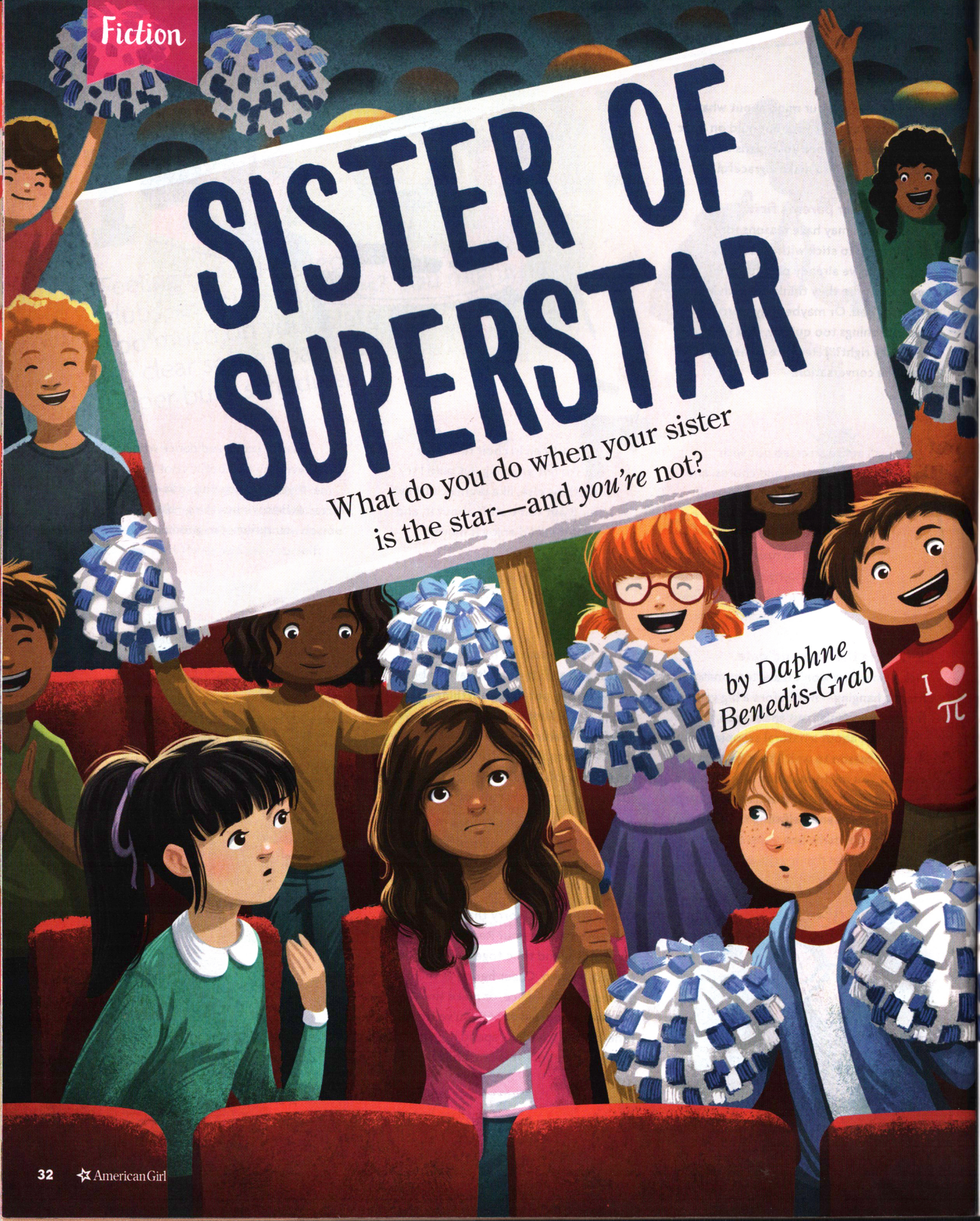
Does a teammate worry that life won't be the same without you? Reassure her that you'll still spend time together, and then make it happen. Cheer her on at the next game or performance, or make time for just the two of you. Now that you've freed up time in your schedule, spend it on the things and people you care about most.

More ideas for managing your time and your life can be found in the book *A Smart Girl's Guide: Getting It Together.* ★



Text: Erin Falligant Illustrations: Brenna Vaughan

Fiction



SISTER OF SUPERSTAR

What do you do when your sister is the star—and *you're* not?

by Daphne Benedis-Grab

The auditorium was packed as Keiko, Henry and I squeezed through the doors. Groups of kids cheered, laughed, and some even chanted as they waited for the main event. Dance music blared through the speakers, revving up the crowd even more. It looked like the scene of a concert or major sporting event, and I guess it was a star-studded performance, but the stars at this show were not the kind who sang or shot baskets. They were the kind who did math.

"Rosa, this is wild," Keiko said, leaning on my arm and laughing. Henry nodded in agreement, grinning as three kids from our homeroom ran by shouting, "Wakefield rules!"

I tried to smile back at my best friends, but it was hard. Wakefield was a school with grades five through eight, so this was our third time attending the Team Selection Rally. In fifth and sixth grades I'd loved every moment of it, from Principal Washington's pep talk to the drumrolls announcing each of the five mathletes who would make up our school's team to compete in the TriMathlon.

The TriMathlon was something a group of principals had cooked up ten years ago. It was a two-hour math competition set up like a game show. Eight schools competed, and the prizes were fantastic—a big pizza and ice cream party for the winning school, a trophy, and best of all, free passes for the entire school to spend a day at Adventureland an hour away. You even got to miss a day of school to attend. Our school, Wakefield, had never won, but I knew a secret that pretty much guaranteed this year's trophy, pizza party and amusement park day would be ours. Which should have made me smile bigger than anyone there. But instead my feet were heavy as I trudged behind Keiko and Henry to some seats in the back bleachers.

My feet were heavy as I trudged behind Keiko and Henry.

Members of student council were passing out blue and white pom-poms, and we each took one. A moment later Principal Washington charged onto the stage shaking her pom-pom and wearing a football jersey with math symbols on it. "Hello students of Wakefield!" she shouted. "Are you ready to meet the team of mathletes who are going to dominate this year's TriMathlon?"

The crowded roared, everyone stomping their feet and waving pom-poms furiously in the air. I imitated them, but Keiko gave me an odd look, so clearly I wasn't convincing.

After pumping up the crowd a bit more, Principal Washington began introducing this year's mathletes. One by one they ran onto the stage as the crowd cheered. But then, when four of the five team members stood on the stage, Principal Washington raised a hand and waited for quiet.

"Our final team member has been doing math since she was three," she began in a hushed voice when the room had settled down. "When kids around her in kindergarten were still learning to count, she was doing long division for fun. Her skills in algebra are currently at the college level,

Illustrations: Vivienne To

and her math IQ is off the charts even though she is only in fifth grade."

The crowd gasped at this news. Well, everyone except me.

"So I'm thrilled to have all of you meet the fifth member of our mathletes squad, the brilliant Carmen Torres!"

Everyone jumped to their feet, cheering and waving pom-poms wildly. Well, everyone except for my two best friends and a few seventh-graders nearby who looked over at me curiously.

"Rosa," Keiko said, her eyes wide as she stared at me. "You never told us your little sister was going to compete in the TriMathlon."

We're so proud," my mom said later that night at dinner. It was like the millionth time she'd said it that night and the million-millionth time she'd said it since Carmen was born. Principal Washington hadn't exaggerated at all. In fact, if anything, she hadn't made it clear how incredibly brilliant and perfect my little sister was.

"Thanks," Carmen said, taking a big helping of enchiladas. When either of us did something special we had a family celebration dinner and got to pick the menu, which was special because our mom, who was born in Mexico, was an amazing cook. But Carmen always chose enchiladas, the only dish I actually disliked. Too much cheese. Not that anyone cared what I wanted. Tonight, like so many nights, was all about Carmen.

"Coach Broderick gave us a study sheet to start prepping for practices," my dad said. "It's all stuff you did last year, geometry and ratios."

"That'll be easy," Carmen said with a nod.

"Coach Broderick also mentioned that sometimes kids get intimidated by the crowd at the TriMathlon," my mom said, refilling Carmen's water glass with the pitcher of ice water on the table. My glass was empty, too, but my mom didn't notice. "She's going to get a volunteer audience for the final practices so you can get more comfortable in front of a big group."

"I'm not worried about that," Carmen said. "I'm good at public speaking." A little bit of cheese was



stuck on her chin, but I didn't feel like telling her. She was so good at everything that she'd figure it out without any help from me.

"Maybe you can help Rosa on that oral report she's doing for social studies," my dad said, smiling at me.

"Carmen won't have time for that now," my mom said quickly. "She needs to spend all her time on her own homework and preparing for the TriMathlon."

"I'll do fine on the oral report," I said. Unlike my perfect sister, I actually did get anxious speaking in front of audiences. If I was going to be onstage, I'd much rather dance. Keiko, Henry, and I took jazz and modern at The Studio, the dance school in town, and I loved performing at our recitals.

"Maybe you can practice on the dogs," my dad said with a chuckle.

I couldn't help laughing with him. Last fall Keiko and I started a dog-walking business (Henry is allergic to dogs, so he couldn't join us). So far we had six dogs that we walked every afternoon. It was fun, and the dogs loved it when you talked to them, so my dad had a point. Plus, I appreciated any comments that weren't just about Carmen.

"Rosa, is the choir going to be performing at the TriMathlon?" my mom asked.

Wakefield had a big choir, probably because there weren't tryouts—if you liked singing, you were welcome. The director, Mr. Choi, picked really fun stuff to sing, and I loved going to our weekly rehearsals.

"No, Mom, they get a real band to play," Carmen said.

I tried not to roll my eyes—of course our amateur choir wasn't good enough for Carmen's big event.



"We do have a concert in a few weeks," I said.

"As long as we don't need to be at practice for the TriMathlon we'll be there," my dad said cheerfully.

That stung—I couldn't believe Carmen's practice would come before my concert. "No, it's after," I said in a low voice.

My dad didn't even seem to hear. And then something awful occurred to me.

"Mom, you're still going to be able to help me bake cupcakes for the Bookworms bake sale this weekend, right?" I asked. I'd started the book club in the fall with a couple of kids from my English class who liked to read as much as I did. After we finished a book, we came up with a cause related to the story and raised money for it. We had just



finished *The War That Saved My Life,* so we were raising money to buy toys and books for the local children's hospital.

"Oh, Rosa, I can't," my mom said regretfully. "We have to take Carmen to register this weekend. Apparently it's a pretty in-depth process. But you're a great baker—you'll be fine without my help."

"You both really have to go?" I asked. I guess I whined because my mom raised her eyebrows at me.

"Rosa, this event is very important to your sister," she said. "Dad and I come out for all your various concerts and sales and recitals. Now it's your sister's turn."

It was always my sister's turn because she was the family star. And my mom made it sound like everything I did was a drain. But as my parents began fussing over Carmen and her math once again, something occurred to me: Was I doing too much? If I had just one thing where I was the genius, like Carmen had with her math, would I be a family star, too?

"I can't believe your sister is a math genius," Jon Walker said as we were filing out of math class a few days later. "I guess it doesn't run in the family."

"Ha, ha," I said, rolling my eyes and trying to look like it didn't bother me. He was not the first person to be surprised there was a genius in my family, and it did bother me, a lot.

Jon pushed through the crowd in the hall to catch up with his friends. It was lunch for seventh graders, so I headed toward the cafeteria, following the scent of burgers and fries. It was weird but our school actually had great cafeteria food, and I was looking forward to eating.

"Hey, aren't you, Rosie Torres, Carmen's sister?" Lily Wong asked me.

I sucked in a breath and nodded. Lily and her friends were the most popular eighth-graders in our school, and she'd never spoken to me before. I had no idea she even knew who I was—though since she called me "Rosie" she obviously still didn't. She was just interested in Carmen.

"Tell her I said good luck," Lily said.

I nodded again as she led her friends down the hall. At this point I could tell Carmen that every single person at school wished her good luck, because just about everyone had asked me about Carmen. It had only been a few days, but I was officially sick of being known as Carmen's sister. I wanted to be known for my own accomplishments, which was why I had come up with a new plan that I was ready to share with my friends.

I hurried through the line at the buffet, paid for my burger and fries, and nearly ran to sit at my usual table with Keiko and Henry.

"Hey, Rosa, Ivy just came by and asked you to give this to Carmen," Keiko said, holding up a pin in the shape of a four-leaf clover.

"Is Carmen studying like crazy?" Henry asked as he squeezed a packet of ketchup on his burger.

Even my friends were all about Carmen!

"Yeah, pretty much," I said, sliding into my seat. "I have something I want to tell you guys."

"Is it that you're sitting in the VIP section at the TriMathlon?" Keiko asked eagerly.

"No, it's not about the TriMathlon," I said, trying not to snap. "I'm going to try out for the ballet intensive at The Studio!"

I'd thought a lot about which activity to focus on, but when I saw the flier about the audition-only intensive, meant only for serious dancers, I knew I'd found it. Carmen would be the mathematician, and I'd be the dancer, performing solos and maybe even working my way to a professional company. And everyone would have to take notice of that!

I looked at Keiko and Henry, waiting for them to get excited. But instead Keiko's brow crinkled, and Henry frowned.

"But you don't like ballet that much," Keiko said.

"Jazz is your favorite," Henry added.

"There isn't a jazz intensive, though," I said, deflated by their lack of enthusiasm.

Just then Nicole Blackman came up to our table and smiled at me shyly. "Rosa, do you think I could get your sister's autograph?" she asked.

I gritted my teeth but nodded because it wasn't Nicole's fault all anyone cared about was Carmen—it was mine for doing too many activities and never getting really good at one thing.

But I was going to fix that now, no matter what my friends said.

I looked at Keiko and Henry, waiting for them to get excited.

I was late for dinner on Friday because I'd gone to the meeting about the ballet intensive at The Studio. I didn't have much of an appetite anyway, especially once I saw we were having enchiladas again.

"Big news, Rosa," my mom said in a giddy tone. "Carmen's been chosen captain of the math team!"

"Great," I said. "And I have some news, too: I'm going to try out for the ballet intensive."

My dad looked at me blankly, even though I'd mentioned I was going to the meeting that afternoon.

"Won't it be too many hours?" my mom asked. "How will you have time for homework?"

It *was* a lot of hours, more than I'd realized. "Well, I might not be able to stay in Bookworms," I said. "Or walk the dogs as much." Just the thought of not seeing the sweet pack of dogs Keiko and I walked, not to mention leaving the book club I'd started, felt awful. But I reminded myself it was for a good cause.

"Your after-school schedule is up to you," my mom said. "As long as you make sure you get your homework done and keep your grades up."

"I will," I said in a small voice. "And can I be excused? My stomach kind of hurts."

They barely noticed as I left my seat and headed upstairs alone.

An hour later there was a knock at my bedroom door. I had changed into dance clothes and was stretching because one thing Madame Juliette had said at the meeting was that a dancer is always working to keep her body limber. I just wished stretching weren't so boring.

"Come in," I called, ready for a distraction and hoping it was one of my parents ready to get excited about my new focus on dance. But to my surprise, it was Carmen who walked in and perched on my desk chair.

"I don't think you should give up all your activities just for dance," she said bluntly.

I pinched my mouth together, annoyed at what a know-it-all she was being. "OK, thanks for your opinion," I said in a frosty tone.

"It's just, I think you'll regret it," she said, and this time she sounded uncertain, which was weird because Carmen was never uncertain. "It's so cool how you do lots of different stuff. You get to try everything and make new friends."

"Yeah, that part's great," I said. She was right—one of the best things about Bookworms was the



new friends I'd made. But that wasn't as good as being a star. "But I'm doing too many different things which means I never get super good at just one thing."

"Right, so everyone likes you because you're Rosa, not because you're great at this one, single thing." Now Carmen's voice was almost bitter. I'd never heard her talk like this before.

"Do you feel that way?" I asked hesitantly. It had never occurred to me that there were things Carmen did not like about being a math genius.

"Don't get me wrong, I love math," Carmen said. "I just sometimes wish I could join a choir or start a dog-walking business and spend an hour being something other than math girl."

I began to consider what it must be like for Carmen, having everyone excited about her because of her skills and what she could do with them. And suddenly being a star no longer seemed like the greatest thing in the world. In fact it seemed a lot like doing a whole bunch of different things but not being an expert at any one: It had its good side and its challenges.

"You know, you might be right," I said to my sister. "Focusing exclusively on ballet might not be best for me."

Carmen raised her eyebrows. "I'm always right," she said in a lofty tone.

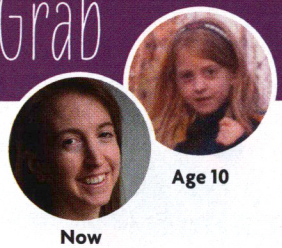
This time I knew she was joking, so instead of thinking she was a know-it-all, I picked up a pillow from my bed and whacked her over the head with it. And a minute later we were having an epic sister pillow fight that was way better than anything else I could think of.

And I knew once the TriMathlon arrived, I'd be Carmen's loudest cheerleader of all.



Meet the Author

Daphne Benedis-Grab



Age 10

Now

Growing up I was sometimes jealous of my sister, and I know she was jealous of me, too. That's normal for sisters. But even when we were kids, I always knew she had my back and now she's one of my very best friends!

THIS OR THAT?

Would you rather . . .

have a puppy ride in your bike basket **OR** find baby bunnies in your backyard?

make your friend a pretty leaf garland **OR** a beautiful bird feeder?

sell bumblebee earrings **OR** dragonfly bracelets?

braid your hair to look like a bird's nest **OR** rabbit ears?

ride to school in a high-speed wheelbarrow **OR** a flying wagon?

design fancy flower crowns **OR** colorful raincoats?

live in a house that looks like a giant watering can **OR** a pinwheel?

decorate your bedroom with mini terrariums **OR** paper butterflies?

spend a week hopping like a rabbit **OR** waddling like a duck?

study different kinds of flowers **OR** bird calls?

fly a kite that looks like a bouquet of flowers **OR** a red barn?

be followed everywhere by a fawn **OR** a baby llama?

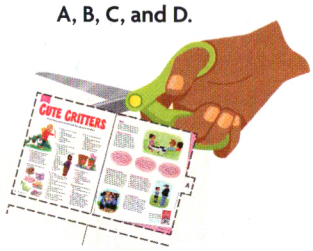


Illustration: Sabina Gibson

Mini Mag

With the Mini Mag, you can make a miniature copy of American Girl for your doll or stuffed animal. All you need are scissors and a stapler. Read the directions all the way through before you begin.

1. Cut out each pair of pages only on the dotted lines. Be sure to cut around the tabs marked with the letters A, B, C, and D.



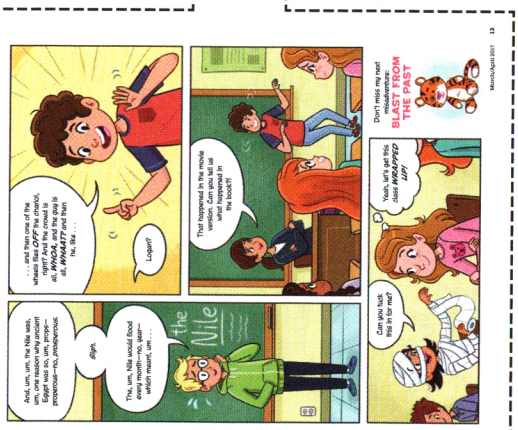
2. Stack the pages on top of one another in the order shown below, with the letters on the tabs facing up.



Continued

Illustrations: Monika Roe

B



D



A

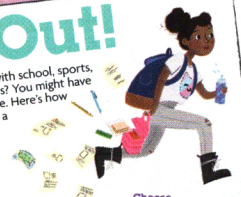


C



I'm Out!

Feeling overwhelmed with school, sports, clubs, or other activities? You might have too much on your plate. Here's how to clear some space in a super busy schedule.



Think

Sure, some of your activities aren't optional—think homework or family stuff. But many activities are things you decide to do. Look at those and ask yourself:

Do I look forward to it?
Maybe you do—or you did when you started, but something's changed. Maybe you never really enjoyed it, but you've stuck it out because your parents or friends wanted you to. If you're dreading the activity, ask yourself how long you've felt that way—and why.

Could I take a break?
Some things are easier to press "pause" on than others, like music lessons that you take on your own or babysitting. Team sports are a little tougher, but when the season ends, you always have the freedom and the choice to sit out the next season.

Is there something I'd rather do?
It doesn't have to be another club or sport. It could be catching up on homework, or just getting more time to rest and recharge.

Choose

Each time you rush off to another activity, draw an emoticon or doodle in your planner to show how you're feeling.

Don't want to go? Draw a frowny face.
Excited about it? Dash off two smiley faces.
Not sure? Draw a so-so face.

After a few weeks, look back over your doodles. It should be easy to see what you enjoy and what you don't. That makes deciding much easier.

4-5:30 SCOUTS

6:30-7 Walk Snoops

9. If you could go anywhere, you'd take a trip to . . .
a. a Paris fashion show.
b. visit relatives you haven't seen in years.
c. the place your ancestors are from.
d. the tallest mountain on earth.
e. watch a rocket launch.
f. the hometown of your favorite author.

10. Which class would you like to take?
a. A class about making and selling your own crafts
b. A class about learning more about your family history
c. A class about training animals
d. A class about wilderness survival skills
e. A class all about crazy science experiments
f. A class about people who have set world records

11. Which Halloween costume would you wear?
a. A famous singer costume
b. A peapod costume
c. An alpaca costume
d. A spy costume
e. An archeologist costume
f. A famous inventor costume



12. You would love to photograph . . .
a. a trendy cafe.
b. the people you love.
c. your friend's new kitten.
d. an amazing surfer.
e. a cool bug.
f. an intense chess match.

13. Which mug do you like best?



14. How do you celebrate after doing well on a really hard test?
a. Treat yourself to a stylish, new shirt.
b. Do something nice for someone else.
c. Go home and relax.
d. Dance like crazy.
e. Stay after class to talk about which questions you liked best.
f. Think about how hard you studied, and enjoy your success.

15. What's the best thing in your bedroom?
a. The cool headboard you made
b. The funny stuffed animal on your bed
c. Your comfy chair
d. The poster of Mount Everest
e. Your terrarium
f. Your bookshelf

16. Which color speaks to you?

17. When you wake up on a Saturday, you like to . . .
a. pick out your outfit for the day.
b. make breakfast with a parent.
c. watch TV with a pet.
d. do something active.
e. read a comic book.
f. plan out your day.



18. Which show sounds most interesting to you?
a. A show about young women who are fashion designers
b. A silly show about two best friends starting a business
c. A show about animals being adopted
d. A show about thrill seekers going on amazing adventures
e. A funny show about solving mysteries
f. A show about incredible things that have happened in history

TURN THE PAGE FOR ANSWERS!

CRAFTY EGGS

A dozen ways to decorate eggs just in time for Easter!

These crafts use artificial eggs made from wood, plastic, and styrofoam. (Find these at craft stores and discount stores.) Unlike real eggs, they're safe to display at room temperature, and you can save them from year to year. Remember to cover your work surface before making any crafts.

PAINT

Wrap masking tape around an egg. Paint one half of the egg using nontoxic acrylic craft paint. (You may need a couple of coats.) Let dry. Remove the tape to reveal a two-color block design.

STRING

Use clear tape to attach one end of a piece of string or embroidery floss to an egg. Wrap the string around the egg many times. Trim the floss and use craft glue to attach the end of the floss to the egg. Let dry.

GLITTER

Use a foam brush to coat an egg with a thin layer of decoupage glue. Before the glue dries, add the glitter. Hold the egg over a disposable plate and shake gently so the egg is evenly covered. Shake off excess glitter. Let dry.

CHALKBOARD PAINT

Paint an egg with nontoxic chalkboard paint. Let dry. (You may need two coats of chalkboard paint.) Draw a design on the egg using chalk or chalk markers.

WASHI TAPE

Create designs on an egg using colorful tape. Try making stripes, or use bits of tape to make a confetti design.

Contest

Butterflies

Our readers created beautiful butterflies.

Dog Days
Lauren K.
Age 13, Virginia

Candy Cane Cool
Elsie G.
Age 10, Maine

Vibrant Vines
Naomi G.
Age 9, New York

Ice Cream Crazy
Samantha S.
Age 10, Ohio

Night Flight
Lauren B.
Age 11, South Carolina

The auditorium was packed as Keiko, Henry and I squeezed through the doors. Groups of kids cheered, laughed, and some even chanted as they waited for the main event. Dance music blared through the speakers, revving up the crowd even more. It looked like the scene of a concert or major sporting event, and I guess it was a star-studded performance, but the stars at this show were not the kind who sang or shot baskets. They were the kind who did math.

"Rosa, this is wild," Keiko said, leaning on my arm and laughing. Henry nodded in agreement, grinning as three kids from our homeroom ran by shouting, "Wakefield rules!"

I tried to smile back at my best friends, but it was hard. Wakefield was a school with grades five through eight, so this was our third time attending the Team Selection Rally. In fifth and sixth grades I'd loved every moment of it, from Principal Washington's pep talk to the drumrolls announcing each of the five mathletes who would make up our school's team to compete in the TriMathlon.

My feet were heavy as I trudged behind Keiko and Henry.

The TriMathlon was something a group of principals had cooked up ten years ago. It was a two-hour math competition set up like a game show. Eight schools competed, and the prizes were fantastic—a big pizza and ice cream party for the winning school, a trophy, and best of all, free passes for the entire school to spend a day at Adventureland an hour away. You even got to miss a day of school to attend. Our school, Wakefield, had never won, but I knew a secret that pretty much guaranteed this year's trophy, pizza party and amusement park day would be ours. Which should have made me smile bigger than anyone there. But instead my feet were heavy as I trudged behind Keiko and Henry to some seats in the back bleachers.

Members of student council were passing out blue and white pom-poms, and we each took one. A moment later Principal Washington charged onto the stage shaking her pom-pom and wearing a football jersey with math symbols on it. "Hello students of Wakefield!" she shouted. "Are you ready to meet the team of mathletes who are going to dominate this year's TriMathlon?"

The crowded roared, everyone stomping their feet and waving pom-poms furiously in the air. I imitated them, but Keiko gave me an odd look, so clearly I wasn't convincing.

After pumping up the crowd a bit more, Principal Washington began introducing this year's mathletes. One by one they ran onto the stage as the crowd cheered. But then, when four of the five team members stood on the stage, Principal Washington raised a hand and waited for quiet.

"Our final team member has been doing math since she was three," she began in a hushed voice when the room had settled down. "When kids around her in kindergarten were still learning to count, she was doing long division for fun. Her skills in algebra are currently at the college level,





Mini Mag

3. Fold the stack of pages in half along the solid line in the center. The cover of the magazine should now be on top. Run your fingernail down the folded edge to help the pages lie flat.



4. Open the folded stack. Staple along the center line. Cut off the tabs, and you're done!



Carefully cut along the dotted lines to remove your posters.



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Am I too old to play with toys?



Dear American Girl,

I am almost 14 years old, and I still like toys. Is there something wrong with me?

Too old for toys?

There is NOTHING wrong with liking toys. In fact, playing with toys can be a great stress reliever. Kids feel a ton of pressure to grow up fast—so much so that sometimes they stop doing their favorite things. Here's why that's bad: Growing up can be really, *really* hard sometimes. It's easier when you get to do the things you enjoy and spend time with the people and things that make you happy. So keep what you love close, for as long as needed. Let your maturity show in the way you treat others and run your life—those things say much more about you than whether you like toys.

Dear American Girl,

I have a friend who talks about how "horrible" her parents are. I go along and say mine are bad, too, but here's a secret: My parents are actually awesome, and I love them! How do I handle this?

Liar

Sometimes it's great to connect with others through things you have in common, as in "Seriously?! That's MY favorite movie, too!" But you don't have to tear down yourself—or others—in order to support a friend. Try "That's got to be hard," or "Why do you think they do that?" Remember, though, that venting too much about a problem can make it seem a lot worse than it actually is. So be there for your friend, and then help her get her mind off her troubles. If she tries to get you to complain, say, "It's not that bad for me. I wish I knew why so I could help you!"

Illustrations: Laura Cornell

Dear American Girl,

My friend comes to school with four sweatshirts on in the morning. That makes me think that she doesn't have a winter coat. I'm really worried. Should I ask if she needs help?

What should I do?

You are an awesome person to notice something like this and want to help. This is a sensitive subject, though, so be careful. If this is a close friend who trusts you, it might be OK to bring it up with her: "Hey, if you need a coat, I bet we could find you one." Then offer to go with her to talk to an adult at school about it. If this girl isn't a close friend, discuss the situation with a parent, who might have advice. Or talk to your teacher or school counselor in private and share your worry. It might be easier on your friendship if you let adults handle this—plus, you might even be mistaken about the situation. But if it turns out that your friend gets help that she needs, you should feel great about your part in it, no matter how big or small.

Dear American Girl,

I am so afraid of dogs that whenever I see one, I scream and run to my parents. This has got to stop, but how?

afraid of dogs

Try not to run—a dog might chase you. (Instead, *stroll* over to your parents.) Since your parents might not always be nearby, it's a good idea to work on this fear. With a parent, pick out a dog that is small and cute and ask its owner if you can meet it. Stay calm. Talk to the dog and use its name. Maybe toss the dog a toy or a treat. Maybe let the dog sniff your hand. Then you can stop. Eventually, you can work up to actually petting a dog. But for now, puppy steps.



Dear American Girl,

There's this girl I don't want to be friends with anymore. The problem is, she knows secrets about me. I'm worried that she might spill them if she gets mad at me.

Worried

If you decide that this friendship isn't for you, it's OK to move on, but maybe this friendship just needs changing. There's no need to have a big "We are NOT friends anymore!" fight with this girl. Friendships can cool off without anyone getting mad. You can go from being close friends to being casual friends. Distance yourself from this girl by spending time with other friends, finding new interests, and having chats that aren't as personal—that is, with fewer feelings and no secrets. As for your secrets, keep them closer in the future. (Except, of course, for secrets that involve anyone getting hurt.) If you keep your secrets safe, you won't have to deal with that icky worried feeling if you're ever in this spot again.



Advice from You

Dear American Girl,

I am having trouble with my friend on the bus. I said something that upset her, and even though the problem is fixed, things are still uncomfortable between us. What can I do to make it better?

Help!

It's normal for a friend to still be upset after an argument or hurtful words. Talk to your friend, and tell her why she is important to you.

Izzy C.

Times like this are hard. I suggest that you talk to your friend about how you feel and maybe to a parent or other trusted adult also.

Neha D.

Invite her to your home sometime or ask her to go do something you both enjoy. That might fix the tension.

Macey

It might not get better unless you talk about this. Find some alone time with your friend and tell her that you feel like things are awkward between you two.

Ophelia L.

Even though the problem is fixed, you two might still have your old ways or habits. It could take some adjusting to keep things good between your friend and you. You have to keep working at it.

Emily

Say to your friend, "Hey, is there anything you want to talk about?" Then you can know how she is feeling.

Monroe

Be kind, and have fun! If you act like things are normal between you, they might get better sooner.

Jewel M.

Help Other Girls!

"My friend is a good artist, and her artwork gets noticed a lot. My artwork barely ever gets noticed. That's hard for me, because I'm the best artist in the class. What can I do to get noticed?

Artistic

Do you have advice to help solve this problem? Or do you need advice for solving your own problem? Send letters to:



BEHIND THE Scenes

We had an egg-cellent photo shoot!

Cover your work space before decorating your eggs!

These are styrofoam eggs!

Our editor Andrea used different types of eggs in this shoot.

Use an old egg carton to hold your eggs.

Our art director Dan created boxes out of balsa wood.

Wooden eggs work great, too!

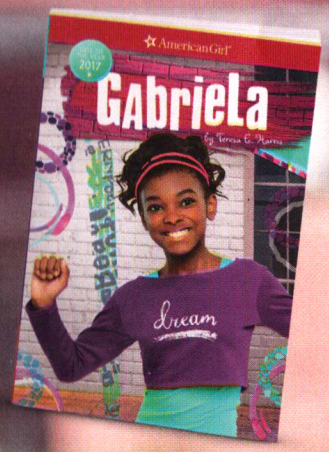


Dan and Andrea chose the perfect background for the eggs.

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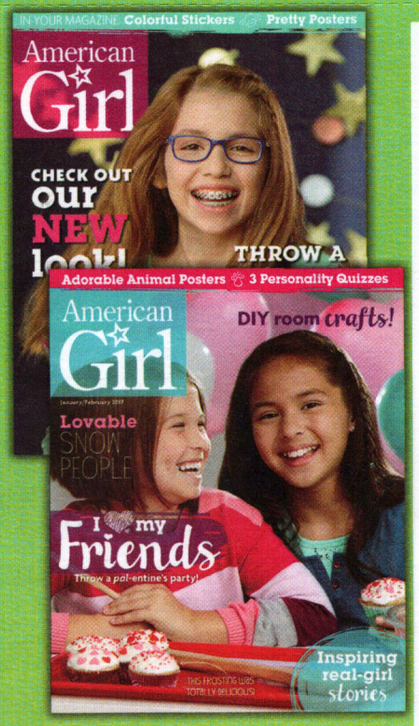
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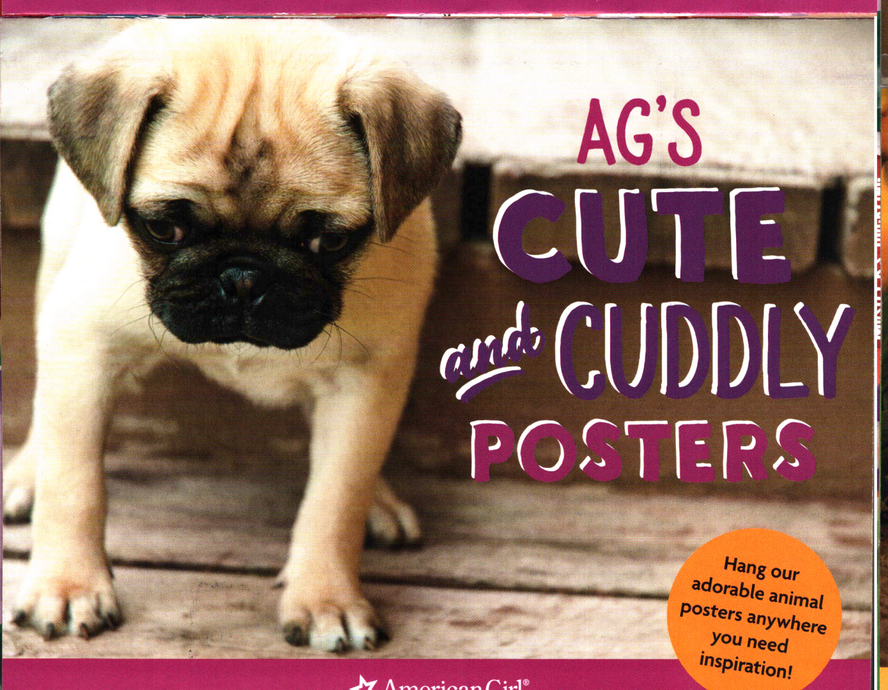
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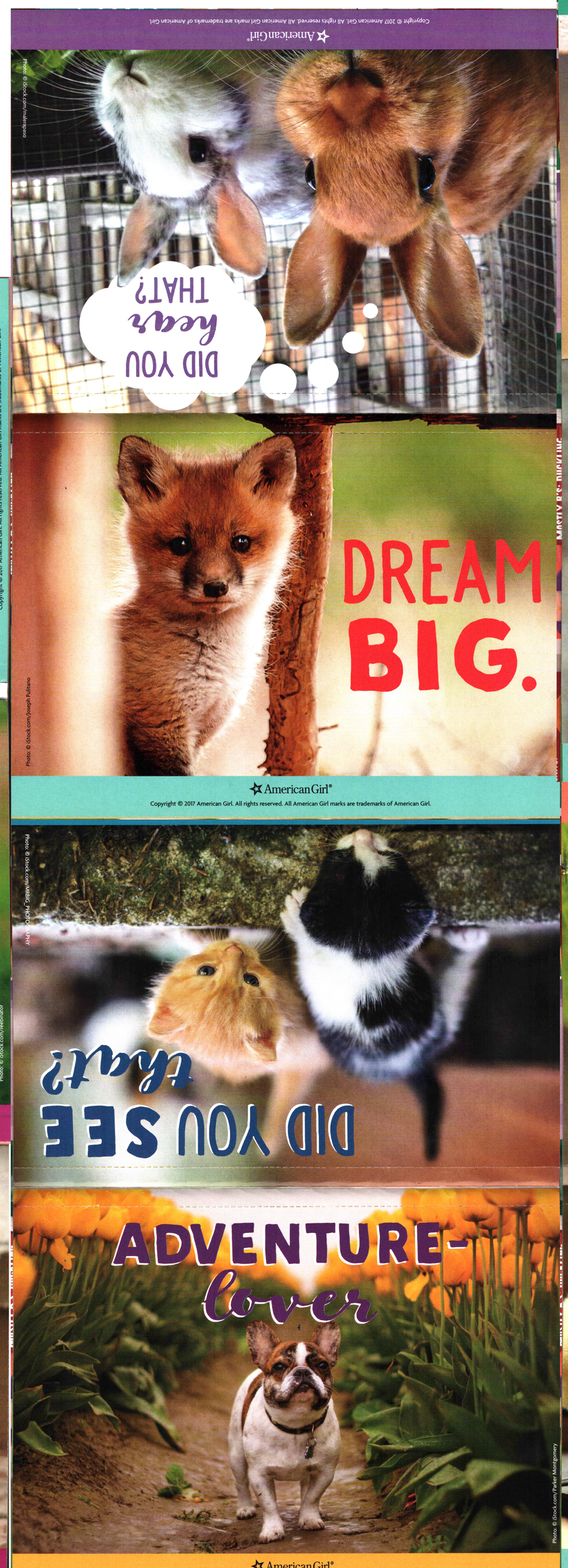
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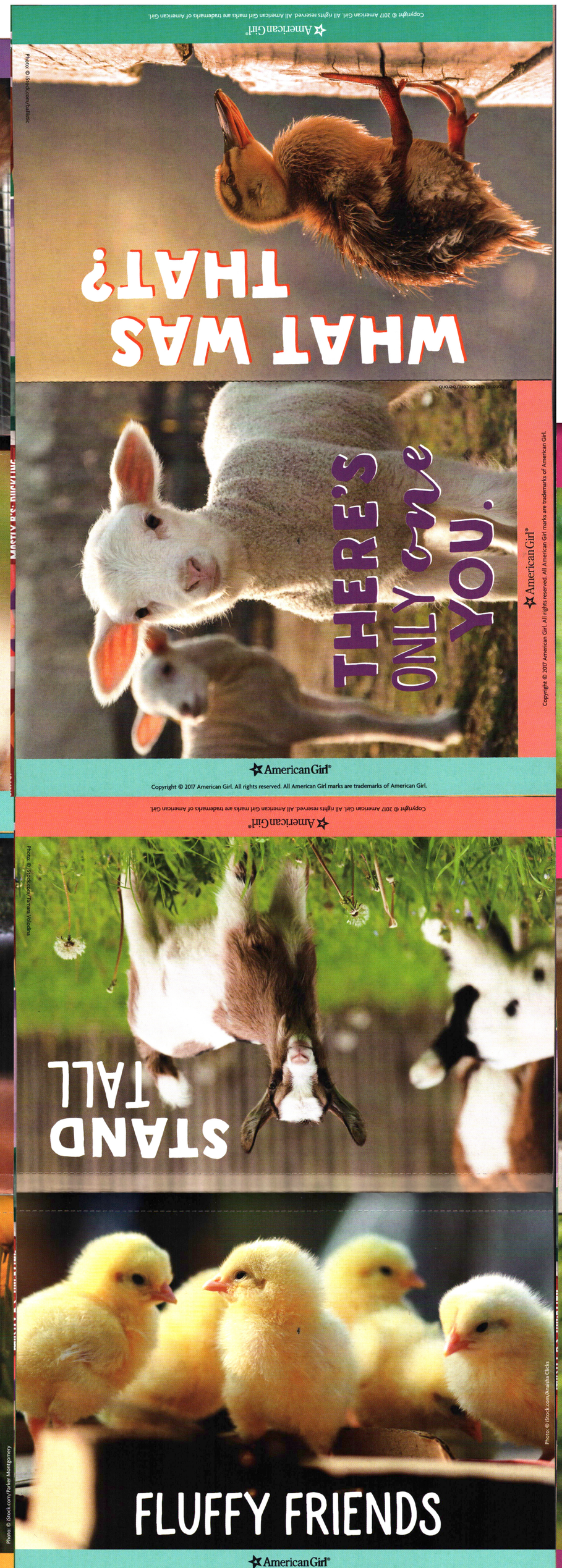
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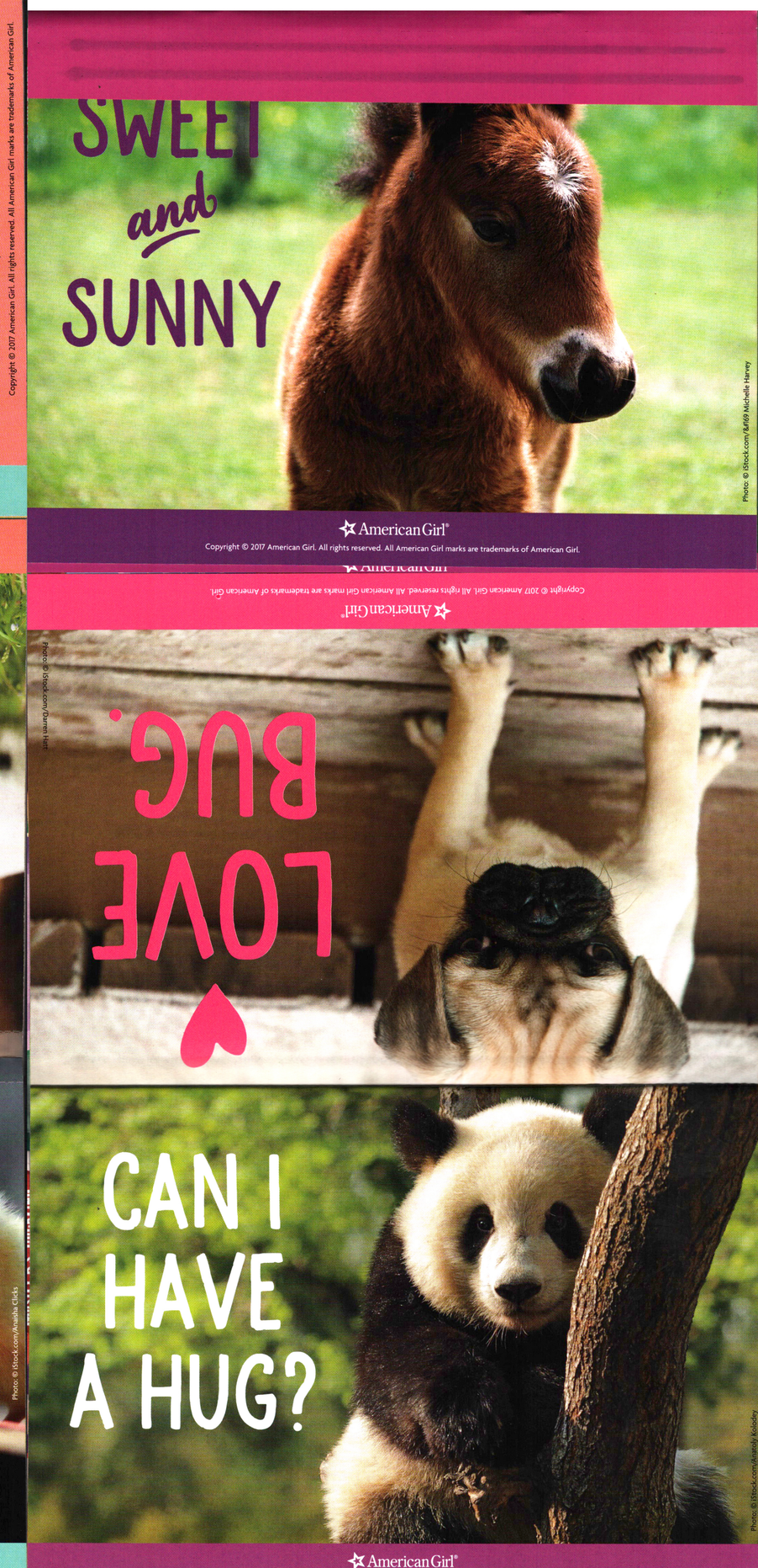
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